

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: March 22, 2017

Agenda Item: Restrict Boating on Waterbodies Designated Suspect or Positive for Invasive Mussels

Division: Fisheries

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 Min

Background:

Invasive mussel larvae were discovered for the first time in Montana in October 2016 in Tiber Reservoir and “suspect” detections were found in Canyon Ferry Reservoir. Invasive mussels rapidly cause significant problems by altering natural systems that support Montana fisheries; overwhelming lakes and rivers and the plants that help keep waters clean and productive; reducing water-based recreation; damaging outdoor equipment, including boats, motors, and associated gear; clogging water pipes and hydropower facilities; jamming municipal water supply lines; and choking off agricultural irrigation systems.

FWP is responding to this threat on multiple levels including inspecting and decontaminating boats and equipment, monitoring waterbodies for AIS, and increasing enforcement efforts at suspect and infested water bodies. FWP is also certifying boaters who primarily recreate on Tiber and Canyon Ferry as Local Boaters upon completion of an educational course and signing a contract with the Department. Local Boaters must decontaminate their boats if they wish to travel to another waterbody, but do not need to decontaminate each time they leave the water.

The Commission has the authority to adopt boating restrictions through annual and biennial rules. In order to effectively decontaminate boats coming from infested or suspect waters, boating restrictions are necessary to limit access to and egress from Canyon Ferry, Tiber, and other reservoirs designated by the Department as suspect or infested. The proposed restrictions would allow local boaters to launch and exit at any ramp, but would limit other motorized use on impacted waterbodies to boaters launching and exiting a reservoir at areas where FWP has sufficient inspection and decontamination staff present to ensure decontamination. Boat ramps open for all use would be dependent on weather, ice conditions, and staffing, and would be posted as open to the public or open to Local Boaters only, as well as kept updated at <http://fwp.mt.gov>.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale:

FWP recommends the Commission approve an annual rule restricting boating on waters designated suspect or positive for invasive mussels as described above.

Proposed Motion:

I move the Commission approve an annual rule restricting the launch and exit of motorized boats on waters designated by FWP as suspect or positive for invasive mussels to only those areas posted as open by FWP on site and on <http://fwp.mt.gov>, with the exception that individuals certified by FWP as “Local Boaters” can launch and exit impacted waterbodies at any ramp.